

Peppers Released by Oregon State University

Mild Habanero Pepper Varieties That are Flavorful Without the Fire

Two mild habanero peppers known as “Notta Hotta” and “Mild Thing” that retain the peppers’ unique fruity and floral fragrances and flavors but have lower heat levels are being released by Oregon State University. “We had chefs walking up to them and looking at them and saying, ‘I know in my mind you’ve told me they’re not hot, but physically I’m preparing for intense heat when I taste these,’” said Jim Myers, a vegetable breeder at Oregon State who spent the last 25 years developing the peppers.

“The chefs have done some very interesting things that I would never have considered, like making a soda that’s flavored with these peppers. And I think there are other potential for flavorings in both savory dishes and in desert-type dishes.” Notta Hotta and Mild Thing have been cleared for release by Oregon State University



Nikki Guerrero, of Hot Mama Salsa, and Jim Myers, of Oregon State University, showcase mild habanero peppers Myers developed. Photo: Shawn Linehan

officials, who can now work with seed supply companies interested in licensing the peppers. Myers expects that next year the varieties will be available at farmers markets, and that home gardeners will be able to grow them.

The story of Notta Hotta and Mild Things began in 2001 when Myers received a mild habanero variety from Kevin Crosby, a fellow vegetable breeder at Texas A&M University. That pepper was then

accidentally crossed during a pepper variety trial at Oregon State. The resulting cross had desirable characteristics around color, shape, pungency and time to ripen.

During the next two decades, between other projects such as developing purple tomato varieties that have drawn widespread attention, Myers continued to breed the pepper. He focused on low heat pungency and early maturity while maintaining high levels of aromatic and flavor compounds. Early maturity is important to allow the peppers to be successfully grown in temperate climates where habaneros typically struggle.

Those years of refinement led Myers to select Notta Hotta and Mild Thing. The two varieties are quite similar but have some slight variations. Notta Hotta is more elongated and smoother and better adapted for a range of climates. In fact, Myers believes it can be successfully grown in much of the United States.

Mild Thing has a blockier shape, rougher texture and slightly more intense flavor, Myers said. It is better suited for the Pacific Northwest climate, he said. Pepper pungency or heat is ranked on the Scoville

scale. Habaneros are typically between 100,000 to 350,000 on the scale. But Notta Hotta and Mild Thing should be around 500 to 1,000.

During the development process, Myers worked closely with Lane Selman, an assistant professor of practice at Oregon State. She is also the founder of the Culinary Breeding Network, which is dedicated to connecting farmers, chefs, plant breeders and consumers.

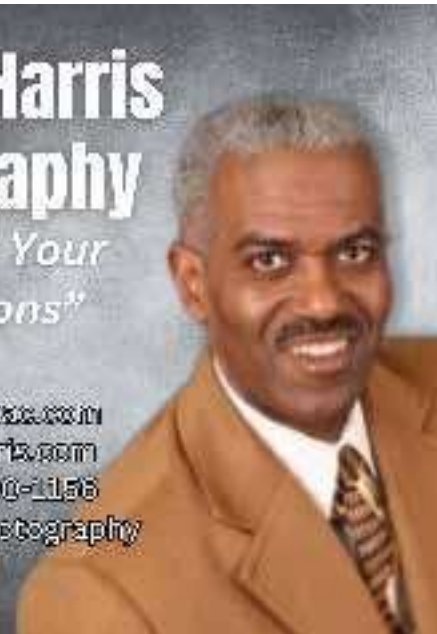
Selman, who calls herself Myers’ cheerleader, initially connected Myers with a group of 25 chefs in 2011 for a mild habanero tasting.

Since then, she has showcased Notta Hotta and Mild Thing at several public events, including the Culinary Breeding Network Variety Showcase in Portland earlier this month. At that event, Myers was paired with Nikki Guerrero, owner of Portland-based Hot Mama Salsa, who made a dish with the peppers. Guerrero also gets credit for naming the peppers.

The mild habaneros are the latest Oregon State discovery in food and agriculture research. University researchers have previously developed the maraschino cherry, marionberry and hop varieties that help launch the craft beer industry.



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“Now It’s Done” Seasonings is a locally owned company headed by the husband-and-wife duo of Jonathan and Sonya Richardson. Our online store opened in the year 2020.

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Sonya and Jonathan Richardson, Owners of “Now It’s Done” Seasoning. (Photo credit: Shawntell Washington.)

“Now It’s Done” seasoning products are available to be purchased at their online store: nowitsdoneseasonings.com (open 24 hours a day), a limited assortment of the blends is also available at Cherry Sprout Produce located at: 722 N Sumner St. Portland, OR 97217.

Customers are welcomed to contact Jonathan if there are any questions concerning their product offerings by Phone: (503) 347-9119 or email at nowitsdone@outlook.com. Go follow on Instagram @nowitsdoneseasonings to get your flavorful seasoning blends now.